

Message Text

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S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 10157

NODIS

FOR NEA-ATHERTON

DELIVER AT 0900 HOURS LOCAL

E.O.XGDS-2
TAGS: PBOR, PINT, PINR, EG, IS, XF
SUBJECT: DRAFT MEMORANDUM ON "CONSEQUENCES OF A MOVE BY SADAT
TO MAKE A SEPARATE PEACE WITH ISRAEL"

1. THE DRAFT MEMORANDUM CONTAINED IN REFTEL A IS A PROVAC-
TIVE AND TIMELY ANALYSIS. I AGREE ALMOST COMPLETELY WITH
THE "ANALYTICAL CONCLUSIONS" AND "IMPLICATIONS FOR THE
US" (PARAS 18-24), THOUGH MY DCM HAS SOME RESERVATIONS.
WE HAVE SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT THE MAIN BODY OF ANALYSIS
WHICH FOCUSES EXCLUSIVELY ON THE ARAB WORLD. BUT MOST OF
OUR COMMENTS ARE DIRECTED TO THE ISRAELI DIMENSION, WHICH
HAS BEEN ALL BUT IGNORED.

2. WITH REGARD TO THE ARAB WORLD, AS IS OFTEN THE CASE,
AMBASSADOR EILTS HAS EXPRESSED BETTER THAN I COULD NEARLY
ALL OF MY REACTIONS (REF B). A MOVE BY SADAT TOWARD A
SEPARATE PEACE SEEMS MORE LIKELY TO PRODUCE A COMPLEX
SPECTRUM RATHER THAN A SIMPLE REJECTIONIST BLOC. MANY OF THE
OTHER ARABS COULD AGREE ON VERBAL HOSTILITY TO SADAT
AND EFFORTS TO ISOLATE EGYPT POLICITALLY, AND FORCE

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SADAT TO REVERSE POLICY. BUT THERE WOULD SURELY BE A
MAJOR DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE BEHAVIOR OF JORDAN,
SAUDI ARABIA, MOROCCO, LEBANON, SUDAN, AND PERHAPS EVEN
SYRIA AND THE MORE MODERATE PALESTINIANS AT ONE END
OF THE SPECTRUM AND THAT OF IRAQ, LIBYA, ET AL AT THE
OTHER. THE SAUDIS WOULD LIKELY FOLLOW THEIR TRADI-
TIONAL CONSERVATIVE TACTICS OF TRYING TO PLAY THE MIDDLE

RATHER THAN CHOOSE SIDES. ULTIMATELY, HOWEVER, THEIR OWN DYNASTIC INTERESTS WILL DICTATE SAFEGUARDING THEIR CLOS LINKS TO SADAT AND HIS MODERATE REGIME, RATHER THAN RISK SEEING ANOTHER NASSER COME TO POWER FOR THE SAKE OF ARAB UNITY. IT WOULD BE BITTER MEDICINE FOR THE SAUDIS TO ACQUIESCE IN AN EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI BILATERAL PEACE THAT SEEMED TO PUT JERUSALEM FOREVER BEYOND ARAB REACH. BUT I BELIEVE BOTH EGYPTIANS AND ISRAELIS WOULD INEVITABLY SEEK A WAY TO FUZZ THAT IMPLICATION AND HOLD THE DOOR OPEN TO A COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT, THUS GIVING THE SAUDIS A POLITICAL STRAW TO WHICH TO CLING. POSSIBLE ADDITIONAL CONSEQUENCE NOT MENTIONED IS INCREASED ALIENATION AND RADICALIZATION OF WEST BANK AND GAZA PALESTINIANS. THERE COULD BE A RISE IN TERRORIST INCIDENTS IN THE WEST BANK. HOWEVER, BY NOW THE ISRAELIS HAVE RATHER EFFECTIVE ANSWERS TO THIS THREAT, EVEN WITHOUT RESORT TO REPRISAL RAIDS AGAINST LEBANESE OR SYRIAN TERRITORY. AND WITH THE EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI BORDER STABILIZED, GAZA WOULD PRESENT LITTLE PROBLEM.

3. ON THE ISRAELI SIDE OF THE EQUATION, WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE BEGIN IS PREPARED TO MAKE AN HONEST TRY AT A COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT, INCLUDING THE GOLAN. THE FORCES AND THE MOMENTUM BUILDING UP HERE FOR A BILATERAL DEAL WITH EGYPT, HOWEVER, ARE SUBSTANTIAL. MOREOVER, I BELIEVE THAT FOR SUCH A DEAL BEGIN, DAYAN, AND WEIZMAN
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MAY WELL OFFER PRACTICALLY IRRESISTABLE TERMS, INCLUDING A RESTORATION OF EGYPTIAN SOVEREIGNTY OVER NEARLY ALL--IF NOT INDEED ALL-- OF SINAI. ON THE OTHER HAND, THERE ARE AS YET FEW ISRAELIS IN POSITIONS OF KEY INFLUENCE PREPARED TO MAKE THE KINDS OF CONCESSIONS ON THE WEST BANK THAT SADAT WOULD NEED TO DEMONSTRATE TO THE ARAB WORLD THAT HE HAS NEGOTIATED A REASONABLE DEAL FOR THE PALESTINIANS. DAYAN IN PARTICULAR SEEMS TO SEE COMPREHENSIVE NEGOTIATIONS PRIMARILY AS A COVER FOR PURSUIT OF A BILATERAL. THE REASONS ARE CLEAR: A) A BILATERAL LOOKS REALLY POSSIBLE OF ATTAINMENT; B) IT WOULD CAUSE THE LEAST INTERNAL POLITICAL STRESSES, PARTICULARLY WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT COALITION; C) CONSIDERING THE PRICE OF ANYTHING MORE COMPREHENSIVE, IT IS ABOUT AS MUCH AS ISRAEL IS WILLING TO PAY NOW TO GET WHAT SHE WANTS MOST, A MUCH REDUCED RISK OF GENERAL WAR. THERE IS A SIZEABLE BODY OF OPINION HERE, THOUGH PROBABLY A MINORITY, WHICH SAYS ISRAEL SHOULD NOT GIVE UP MUCH IF ANY TERRITORY IN THE WEST BANK, EVEN IN RETURN FOR PEACE. THE COUNTRY AND THE KNESSET ARE DEEPLY SPLIT OVER THIS QUESTION. A GENUINE PEACE WITH EGYPT WOULD BEGIN TO CHANGE THAT PICTURE, BUT ONLY AFTER ITS

PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS HAD BEEN MORE FULLY DIGESTED.

4. WE HAVE TALKED TO MANY PEOPLE WHO KNOW BEGIN WELL IN TRYING TO ASSESS WHERE HE WOULD EVENTUALLY COME DOWN. THE PLAIN FACT IS NO ONE KNOWS. THERE ARE SOME WHO SAY THAT, GIVEN THE HISTORIC OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE COMPREHENSIVE AND DURABLE PEACE FOR HIS PEOPLE, HE WILL PUT THAT PRINCIPLE ABOVE HIS PRINCIPLED DEVOTION TO THE HISTORIC LAND OF JUDEA AND SAMARIA. AS MANY OTHERS SAY HE IS MORE LIKELY TO SETTLE FOR HALF AN HISTORIC LOAF, IN A BILATERAL DEAL WITH EGYPT, IN ORDER TO HOLD ONTO HIS CHERISHED CONVICTIONS AND THE WEST BANK. I BELIEVE HE CAN EVENTUALLY SWALLOW SOME FOR OF DAYAN'S "FUNCTIONAL APPROACH" TO SHARING OF CONTROL AND EVEN
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SOVEREIGNTY WITH JORDAN. BUT I DOUBT THAT HE WILL GO FURTHER. IF THAT IS NOT ENOUGH FOR EGYPT, JORDAN AND SAUDI ARABIA, HE IS MOST LIKELY TO GO FOR THE BILATERAL IN THE END. THERE ARE SIGNES THAT INTERNAL POLITICAL FORCES ARE ALSO MOVING IN THAT DIRECTION. WE ARE BEING CRITICIZED FOR NOT WHOLEHEARTEDLY SUPPORTING THE ISRAEL-EGYPT INITIATIVE -- RESPONDING LATE AND GRUDGINGLY TO THE INVITATION TO CAIRO, CLINGING TO OUR "ILL-ADVISED WOOING" OF SYRIA AND THE RADICALS, EXPECTING PREMATURE AND UNREASONABLE CONCESSIONS FROM ISRAEL. WE ARE BEING ADVISED NOT TO MEDDLE, TO STAND ASIDE AND LET THE TWO SIDES HANDLE THIS AND, IN EFFECT, TO PLAY ONLY SUCH ROLE AS ISRAEL AND EGYPT MAY REQUEST.

5. FROM SEVERAL REPORTS WE KNOW THE ISRAELIS PUSHED HARDER WITH SADAT ON THE BILATERAL TRACK THAN THEY HAVE REVEALED TO US. FURTHERMORE THE LEAKS HERE, PARTICULARLY FROM THE CABINET WHICH HAS APPARENTLY BEEN WELL BRIEFED, ARE GROWING DAILY. THERE ARE FREQUENT REFERENCES TO SUPPOSED SECRET, BILATERAL MEETINGS, BOTH ON MILITARY AND POLITICAL SUBJECTS, AND INVOLVING BOTH THE DEFENSE AND FOREIGN MINISTERS. THE MORE PROMISING THE BILATERAL TRACK LOOKS, THE MORE LIKELY THE ISRAELI ARE TO USE SUCH LEAKS TO BUILD SUSPICION AMONG THE ARABS AND DRIVE A WEDGE BETWEEN SADAT AND THE OTHERS, TO ISOLATE AND ENCOURAGE HIM IN A BILATERAL TRACK. DAYAN, WHO TWO WEEKS AGO GAVE A VERY CONCILIATORY, ALMOST DOVISH TV INTERVIEW, REVERTED DECEMBER 1, IN ANOTHER INTERVIEW, TO A LINE AS HARD AS THAT HE TOOK IN THE NEGOTIATIONS ON THE WORKING PAPER. IT SEEMD TO FORESHADOW A VERY TOUGH LINE IN COMPREHENSIVE NEGOTIATIONS AT CAIRO. THE

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 TEL AVIV 10157

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FOR NEA ATHERTON

FACT IS THAT IF A BILATERAL WITH EGYPT IS POSSIBLE,
ISRAEL HAS LESS INDUCEMENT TO PURSUE A COMPREHENSIVE
NEGOTIATION
THAT WOULD OBLIGE IT TO CONFRONT THE INTRANSIGENT AND
PAINFUL PROBLEM OF THE WEST BANK. THIS IS NOT TO SAY THERE
IS NO INCENTIVE, HOWEVER, LARGE ELEMENTS OF THE GOVERNMENT
COALITION, AND A MUCH LARGER PART OF THE OPPOSITION,
REMAIN VERY UNCOMFORTABLE WITH THE PROSPECT OF INDEFINITE
ISRAELI RULE OVER SO MANY ARABS. A DEAL ONLY WITH
EGYPT LEAVES THIS PAINFUL DILEMMA UNRESOLVED.

6. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, I WOULD LIKE TO COMMENT ON
THE CHOICES OUTLINED IN PARAS THREE REF A AND THE POLICY
CONSIDERED IN PARAS 23-24. CHOICES (A) AND (B) SEEM SO
LITTLE DIFFERENT AS TO BE DISCUSSED TOGETHER. IF SADAT
COULD ACHIEVE ANY KIND OF WEST BANK-GAZA OFFER THAT WOULD
LEND HIM ANY REAL POLITICAL DEFENSE, EVEN A JORDAN-WEST
BANK DEAL, THE REST WOULD PROBABLY FALL IN PLACE. IF
IT WERE NOT POLITICALLY CREDIBLE, IT WOULD NOT HELP MUCH
WITH HIS PROBLEMS AND EVEN JORDAN MIGHT BE UNABLE TO BUY
IT. SIMILARLY, (C) AND (D) SEEM TO HAVE LITTLE
DIFFERENCE IN TERMS OF PRACTICAL EFFECT. IN EITHER CASE,
THE RESULT IS A BILATERAL DEAL AND, FOR SADAT, GREAT
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DIFFICULTIES IN THE ARAB WORLD. THE CHOICES, STILL,
SEEM TO US BETWEEN PURSUING A VIABLE WEST BANK SETTLEMENT

AS THE HEART OF THE PROBLEM, OR AN EGYPT-ISRAEL BILATERAL AS BETTER THAN NOTHING.

7. THE ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF A BILATERAL TRACK ARE FAIRLY WELL COVERED IN REFTEL. FROM OUR PERSPECTIVE, IT WOULD MUTE ISRAELI CRITICISM OF THE U.S. (WHICH IS LIKELY TO GROW IF THE ISRAELIS PERCEIVE WE ARE RELUCTANT OR OBSTRUCTIVE ABOUT SUPPORTING THEIR INTERESTS IN A BILATERAL TRACK, WHICH THEY NOW SUSPECT). BY THE SAME TOKEN, IT WOULD REASSURE ISRAEL ABOUT THE SOLIDITY OF AMERICAN SUPPORT FOR THE PRIMACY OF ISRAEL'S INTERESTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST, WHICH HAS CERTAINLY BEEN QUESTIONED IN RECENT MONTHS. THERE IS ALSO IN MY OPINION A LIKELIHOOD THAT GENUINE BILATERAL PEACE WITH EGYPT WOULD ULTIMATELY STRENGTHEN THOSE FORCES HERE WHO ARE READY TO RISK WITHDRAWAL FROM MUCH OF THE WEST BANK TO COMPLETE THE NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL'S CLOSEST NEIGHBOR, JORDAN. MOREOVER, A BILATERAL SETTLEMENT WOULD PERMIT SOME REDUCTION OF THE CRUSHING LOAD OF ISRZILI DEFENSE EXPENDITURES AND EASE SOMEWHAT THEIR ASTRONOMICAL DEMANDS FOR U.S. ARMS SALES. FINALLY, THERE IS OF COURSE ALWAYS THE UNPREDICTABLE STATE OF BEGIN'S HEALTH TO CONSIDER. SHOULD IT WEAKEN, A NEW SET OF POLITICAL FORCES WOULD COME TO POWER IN ISRAEL WHICH WOULD PROBABLY BE LESS IDEOLOGICALLY TORTURED BY MAJOR WITHDRAWALS ON THE WEST BANK. CERTAINLY THE GREAT REDUCTION IN RISK OF A GENERAL WAR AND THE CONSEQUENT GAIN FOR ISRAEL'S SECURITY ARE POWERFUL ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF A BILATERAL, IF IT DOES INDEED SEEM POSSIBLE OF ATTAINMENT AND A COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT LOOKS REMOTE.

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8. I AGREE WITH THE COURSE OF ACTION OUTLINED IN PARAS 23-24. IN CARRYING IT OUT, HOWEVER, WE NEED TO BE CAREFUL NOT TO PRODUCE A SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY. UP TO NOW, WE HAVE BEEN RESOLUTE IN OUR COMMITMENT TO A COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT AND OUR EFFORTS TO PURSUE IT. ANY HINT OF A RETREAT WOULD HARDLY GO UNNOTICED HERE AND ELSEWHERE IN THE AREA. THE ISRAELIS WOULD BE QUICK TO DRAW THEIR OWN CONCLUSIONS, IN POLICY AND IN PUBLIC COMMENT. THE KIND OF ACTIVITIES REFERRED TO ABOVE, PARA 3-4, WOULD INCREASE AND WE WOULD COME UNDER PRESSURE FOR MORE DECISIVE OPEN SUPPORT FOR A BILATERAL DEAL. DAYAN HAS ALREADY PROPOSED TO US PRIVATELY, AND IS NOW SAYING PUBLICLY, THAT THE U.S. SHOULD BE PREPARED TO DANGLE BEFORE EGYPT THE PROSPECT OF MASSIVE ECONOMIC AID IF, BUT ONLY IF, IT MAKES A DEAL WITH EGYPT.

9. THE EFFECT OF SUCH A PERCEIVED U.S. SHIFT COULD BE

TO ENCOURAGE THE ISRAELIS TO BE EVEN LESS PREPARED TO NEGOTIATE WITH SADAT A MEANINGFUL FORMULA FOR THE PALESTINIAN COMPONENT OF ACEOMPRHENSIVE SETTLEMENT. THE ISRAELIS ARE VERY TOUGH IN SEEKING WHAT THEY PERCEIVE TO BE THEIR OWN INTERESTS. DAYAN IS QUITE FREE IN TELLING US WE DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE ARABS; THAT EGYPT CAN GO IT ALONE AND DOES NOT NEED THE OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES; AND THAT WE OVERESTIMATE THE INFLUENCE OF THE SAUDIS. THE ISRAELIS ARE QUITE CAPABLE, IF THEY THINK THEY HAVE SADAT CORNERED IN BILATERALS WITH OUR SUPPORT, OF TRYING TO DRIVE TOO HARD A BARGAIN. THE RESULT COULD BE THAT WHAT IS PICTURED IN PARA 4, REFTEL, AS A CHOICE MIGHT BE A TRAGIC DILEMMA FOR SADAT. WE NEED THEREFORE TO AVOID INADVERTENT ENCOURAGEMENT OF ANY ISRAELI BARGAINING TACTICS WHICH COULD INADVERTENTLY DRIVE SADAT BACK INTO THE ARMS OF THE MORE RADICAL ARABS AND INCREASE THE CHANCE OF A NEXT WAR.

10. WE SEE A STRONG ARGUMENT FOR A MORE RESTRAINED AND
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LESS VISIBLE AMERICAN ROLE, AT LEAST FOR THE SHORT RUN. THE GAME HAS GOTTEN VERY CONFUSED AND THERE MAY BE SOME MERIT IN STANDING BACK AND SORTING THINGS OUT BEFORE DECIDING ON ANY SIGNIFICANT NEXT STEPS. THE LOGIC OF SADAT'S MOVES IS SUFFICIENTLY MURKY THAT WE MIGHT BEST LET EVENTS UNFOLD A BIT TO MAKE THEM MORE SUSCEPTIBLE TO ANALYSIS. WE THINK, NEVERTHELESS, THAT THE LINE PROPOSED IN PARAS 23-24, IF CAREFULLY ADHERED TO, IS WELL CALIBRATED TO THE IMMEDIATE PROBLEMS. UNLESS WE ARE PREPARED TO GIVE UP ANY REMAINING CHANCES FOR A BORDER SETTLEMENT, WE SHOULD DO NOTHING TO ENCOURAGE THE ISRAELIS TOWARD A SEPARATE PEACE. BUT NEIGHER SHOULD WE PUBLICLY RULE OUT THAT POSSIBILITY, BOTH FOR REASONS OF OUR RELATIONS WITH SADAT AND BEGIN, AND ALSO TO KEEP SOME PRESSURE ON SYRIA TO REGOIN THE NEGOTIATING CAMP.
LEWIS

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